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ABSTRACT

Since the mid-1960s, some affluent white schools, both public and private, have made efforts to welcome low-income students of color into their student bodies. However, studies of these efforts have usually ignored the complex and deep ambivalence experienced by many young people of color in white middle-class institutions. This paper attempts to gain insight into the challenges that young men of color face in education, with a focus on faculty and student development, and to clarify the phenomenon of institutional inclusion and exclusion. It describes a university-school collaborative effort to create a more inclusive school environment at an urban high school of 1,110 male students. The school increased its minority student population from less than 5 percent to 12 percent in 1991. A new Director of Diversity, a graduate student of color at Boston College, the second member of the partnership, was hired to work collaboratively with faculty, students, and a college faculty member. Methods included: (1) observation; (2) interviews with teachers, students, and parents; (3) document analysis; and (4) an examination of demographic, political, and economic statistics. Findings suggest that university-secondary school collaborative research raises the level of discussion necessary to form inclusive school communities. The following common themes have emerged from qualitative case studies of school segregation: the dynamics of interracial relationships; the need for a sense of home; the importance of adults of color; the dynamics of social-class stratification; the implicit model of cultural assimilation in schools; and the inability or unwillingness of the majority to understand the perspectives of the minority. Contains 41 references. (LMI)

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Working Toward An Inclusive School Culture:

A University-Secondary School Collaborative Model of Reflective Practice

Address delivered at the Annual Convention American Association of School Administrators February 13, 1993 Orlando, Florida

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INTRODUCTION

Since the mid-1960's some affluent white schools, public and private, have made efforts to welcome low-income students of color into their student bodies especially through organizations such as A Better Chance, Prep for Prep, Higher Achievement, Metco and Aim High (O'Keefe, 1991). If success is measured by a generational increase in educational attainment, professional status and income, the literature demonstrates that a number of these efforts have met their goal (Griffin, J. and Johnson, 1988; Barnds, 1988; O'Keefe, 1991). However, these data do not describe the complex and deep ambivalence many of these young people of color experience in white middle-class institutions (Rodriguez, 1983; Jordan, 1984; Martin, 1985; Anson, 1987; Hallinan and Williams, 1987; Countryman, 1988; Fordham, 1988; Cary, 1991; Griffin, E., 1991; O'Keefe, 1991; Zweigenhaft and Domhoff, 1991).

THE CONTEMPORARY SCENE

School Personnel

The vast majority of professional school personnel are and, for the foreseeable future, will be white and middle-class. Recent national statistics indicate that only 6.9% of the teaching force is Black and only 1.9% Hispanic. To

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illustrate this point, imagine a typical teacher education department of 400 students: 362 are White, 22 Black, 7 Hispanic, 3 Asian and 3 Native American (Haberman, 1989). The Quality Education for Minorities Project's fourth national goal is to quintuple the number of minority college students who enter teaching from the current 6,000 per year to 30,000 by the turn of the century (1990). Given current rates of students of color in teaching, that goal seems elusive. The authors of *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* put it well when they report that we face "... a future in which both white and minority children are confronted with almost exclusively white authority figures in school,"(Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986).

Given the mismatch between the cultural profile of the adult community of the school with the student community, it is incumbent upon the educational research community to provide insight into the challenges, opportunities and obstacles young people of color face and to identify policies and programs that foster the development of welcoming school communities. One of the major obstacles to progressing in this area is the refusal to acknowledge trends that separate Americans, especially along lines of race and gender. Claude Steele expresses the sentiments of many when he writes: "I sense a certain caving-in of hope in America that problems of race can be solved. Since the sixties, when race relations held promise for the dawning of a new era, the issue has become one whose persistence causes "problem fatigue" (1992, p.68).

Race

John Goodlad put it well when he said in a speech at the University Council for Educational Administration Convention in November, 1992 , that "racism is America's congenital disease." Twenty-four years ago we heard from the Kerner Commission that, unless drastic steps were taken, the United States would become two nations, separate and unequal: one black, one white; one rich, one poor; one urban, one suburban. In his recent book, social scientist Andrew Hacker (1992) posits that the prophecy of the late 60's has been realized. Educational attainment and income figures substantiate what we all saw last spring in Los Angeles: racism perdures. Efforts to desegregate are slow and painful and we have so far to go.

Immigration

While the legacy of racism perdures, the nation faces new demographic challenges. Immigration rates of this past decade have came close to reaching the levels the nation knew at the beginning of the century. The majority of immigrants of several generations past, those who are feted at the Statue of Liberty, shared a common European heritage. As Ellis Cose (1992) demonstrates, today's immigrants differ from those who came before: they are from other parts of the globe and they bring to the nation a linguistic, philosophical and religious diversity heretofore unknown. Yet, like their European counterparts of another age, they frequently face xenophobic reactions. Continuing high rates of entry and differential birth rates will only intensify the national debate we face today: will we abandon our old model of cultural assimilation in favor of a model of cultural pluralism? Will the melting pot be replaced by the mosaic?

Socioeconomic Bifurcation

The link between race, ethnicity and class is the larger phenomenon of socioeconomic bifurcation. It is indisputable that the gap between wealthy and poor has continued to widen in the past decade. Statistics that reveal vast disparities in income, housing options, health care and educational opportunities have shattered our image of a large and growing middle class where volition determines opportunity. Marian Wright Edelmen and many others paint a bleak picture of this bifurcated society in which the young, especially those in the cities, suffer most (Children's Defense Fund, 1991; Hewlett, 1991). One-fourth of America's children live in poverty, 100,000 of them are homeless; inadequate housing and health care for so many places us low on the list of industrialized nations. And in the future, a growing percentage of those in poverty will be children of color. In a recent demographic analysis one reads, "By the year 2000, one in three minority children will be from a minority population, compared with about one in four today. Child poverty rates, however, are two to three times higher for minority children that for non-Hispanic whites," (Ahlburg and DeVita, 1992). Perhaps Robert Bellah's analysis of white, middle-class culture this past decade is correct: we are sowing the seeds of our unshaken belief in the unbounded rights of the autonomous individual (1985, 1991). Faced with this bifurcation of social classes, commitment to public life erodes because too many of us have become inured, too many of us belong to, in the words of John Kenneth Galbraith, "the culture of contentment," (1992).

Segregation by School

In his characteristically homiletic style, Jonathan Kozol vividly illustrates the ongoing segregation of the wealthy and the poor in U.S. schools (Kozol, 1991). Lowell Weiker, Governor of Connecticut, last month devoted his State of the State address to the growing segregation by race of his state's public schools. There are numerous court cases across the country which challenge the inequitable funding of public education. In an article published by *The Boston Globe* on January 8, 1992, Gary Orfield stated the case clearly: "...breach[ing] city-suburban boundaries is the key to making integration work." He suggested as a model the state of Delaware, which has created a series of city-suburban school districts that have yielded the most racially mixed educational environments nationally. In stark contrast and far more typical is the city of Boston whose school population is 80% minority and 20% white, in contrast to the racial percentages of the city's school-age population--about 60% minority and 40% white. To paraphrase Andrew Hacker, we are not only two nations, but two school systems. In fact, many see ours as an era of resegregation by school. And if desegregation happens at all, the case of Chelsea Clinton reminds us that it will not happen in East St. Louis or Camden, New Jersey or the South Bronx; it will happen in white affluent schools.

Segregation in School

Segregation by race and class not only happens by school; it happens in school. Segregation by race is made manifest by asking the following questions in a given institution: Are there a disproportionate percentage of low-income students of color in lower tracks? Does one see exclusive social groupings of students by race or class? Do interracial friendships last? Is there interracial dating? Are there violent disruptions in school life prompted by racism? Do minority students participate fully in the extracurricular and social life of the school? Does segregation in school account for differential drop-out rates of students of color? Since comprehensive answers to such questions of such complexity and depth are beyond the scope of this paper (see National Association of Independent Schools, 1988), I will simply highlight a 1992 survey of high-achievers conducted by Who's Who Among American High School Students High achievers. While Blacks and Whites agree that race relations are getting worse, they disagree about the effects of prejudice, affirmative action and the prevalence of racially-motivated disturbances in school. Paul Krouse, the

publisher of *Who's Who* , writes, "If almost six out of ten Black students have felt themselves to the victims and only one in ten white students acknowledges their complicity, then there is clearly a need to sensitize people about what constitutes a discriminatory act. . .What some white students see as innocent, their black peers see as hurtful"(1992, p.2).

PURPOSE

There is a need in the educational research community to increase the level of insight into the complex and deep ambivalence raised by the complex questions emanating from segregation in school. For White middle-class researchers, the work must be done with humility and in conjunction with adults of color. One student of color articulated the dilemma well: "Poised between two different worlds, I have learned that the emotional power of some experiences can never be conveyed to another. Outsiders can begin to appreciate that which is foreign to them when they realize that they will never fully understand" (Neira, 1988, p. 342).

In the past few years there have been important developments in our conceptions of school-university collaboration (Gross, 1988; Sirotnik and Goodlad, 1988; Greenberg, 1991; Wilbur and Lambert, eds. 1991; Russell and Flynn, 1992). Though a thorough review of all the salient literature is beyond the scope of this paper, it is clear that no author addresses directly the ways in which universities can assist educators in their efforts to overcome segregation in schools. I hope to begin that discussion through reflection on one on-going research project.

RESEARCH SITES

The School

The research site is an urban high school of 1100 boys where only six years ago less than 5 % of the students were of color. At that time, school administrators redoubled recruitment efforts through allocation of financial aid resources and the establishment of an administrative position entitled "Director of Diversity." Though the minority representation increased to 12% two years ago, the number of racist incidents also increased, retention rates began to fall, minority students voiced increasing alienation and most faculty relinquished

responsibility for diversification to the administration. With the departure of the Director of Diversity, who was White, school administrators asked the university for assistance. As a result of discernment efforts involving all constituencies within the school, the principal hired a new Director of Diversity to work collaboratively with faculty, students and myself to create a more inclusive school culture. The Director of Diversity is the only adult of color at the school and is also a part-time graduate student at the university.

The University

Boston College is a private, Jesuit doctoral-granting university with a total student enrollment of 14,455, 6.7% of whom are Hispanic or non-White. In the School of Education there are 748 undergraduate and over 1,000 graduate students. There are long-standing cultural ties between the university and the school. For example, nearly half of the school faculty are B.C. alumni, a number of teachers are current part-time students and large numbers of school alumni attend the college.

RESEARCH METHODS

The Director of Diversity and I use variegated methods to gain insight into the challenges, opportunities and obstacles that young men of color face: observation of the school environment; interviews with faculty, parents, current students and alumni; analysis of an array of informative documents--from self-accreditation reports to the student literary magazine; scrutiny of curricular materials; and examination of statistics that describe the demographic, political and economic context in which the institution exists. As we try to identify and make explicit the phenomenon of institutional inclusion and exclusion, the inter-ethnic composition of the research team is of singular importance. At this stage, we have focused our efforts on faculty and student development.

INITIAL FINDINGS AND HYPOTHESES

Insights Of Faculty

I conducted, taped and transcribed interviews with a representative sample of twenty teachers, approximately one-third of the faculty. Every

interviewee supports the effort to diversify the student body. Moreover, they claim that this sentiment is shared by all of their peers. Bill, a long-time veteran teacher, said, "It's the shape of things to come." Mike, a new member of the faculty, spoke about the benefits of diversity: "It's so healthy for kids to see kids of other backgrounds who are just as good as they are." He added, however, "We've only started. It's a small beginning."

Race, class and ethnic division is a neuralgic national dilemma. Predictably, faculty opinions about segregation in school diverge considerably. Ellen revealed her ignorance about the depth of students' sense of alienation when she says, "Their dialect may be different, but appearance and interests the same. They all look alike to me." Fred bemoaned the "self-segregation" of students of color in the school cafeteria, a phenomenon he noticed in a suburban public school that participates in a voluntary busing program. Bill conveyed a prejudice about the academic incompetence of students of color when he claimed that programs to diversify the student body will not succeed "...as long as the school remains committed to the idea of academic excellence."

Most faculty, however, expressed greater sensitivity to minority students. Mary told me, "It must be very difficult. Can they ever feel at home? One student didn't want to be known as Hispanic...but I think it's improving with larger numbers of minority students." Unfortunately, projections indicate that the number of students of color will decrease next year. Patrick spoke of the challenge: "Competition has always been high here, academically, athletically, in every way imaginable -- and in it there's such a powerful urge to conformity." When I asked him, "Conformity to what?" he answered, "the life of upper middle class suburbia." He added, "kids wear their wealth here" and explained that "the whiteness of this place is so self-evident that there's no need even to comment on it." Peter commented: "On minority recruiting, rhetoric and reality aren't the same thing. We can say certain things but not really mean it. The reality is otherwise and we know it." When I asked what he meant, he responded, "We're supposed to create a culture which fosters community but in reality it's 'We're Number One.'" Jean, a strong supporter of diversification, sees underlying problems which the school community must confront. She said:

> What I see, the general attitude of the students and faculty, is that we are a benevolent force in the community by accepting people [minorities] here. They will simply have to adapt. Their

> extraordinary efforts to adapt will probably be fruitful, but we won't hurt in any way, grow in any way, change in any way because of their presence here. People still use those old categories of cultural deprivation: They are deprived of culture. We're offering them the extraordinary chance to get into this white culture. There's very little acceptance of our need to change or that we could benefit from them being here.

A dynamic of institutional life is the gap between the espoused mission and the lived reality; the distance between the two is unsettling. Though some teachers have become discouraged by the distance, others feel challenged and energized. Tom remarked:

> It's going to take some serious commitment and the courage and leadership to say, "This is where we're going to go, you're with us or you aren't." There's a cost and we're afraid of that cost. There are a lot of people who would prefer to avoid the conflicts, the real consequences politically, financially. We need leadership that has vision and courage.

Tom's call for visionary leadership entails the building of a community based on shared intimacy and interdependence and characterized by acquaintance, empathy and trust. Key to this community is an honest recognition of the good and the bad, the heroic and the cowardly. Robert Bellah would call this a "community of memory" as opposed to a "community of interest" in which "self-interested individuals join together to maximize individual good." The community of memory looks not only at the success that makes bonding easy, but also the painful memories and unrealized potential:

> If the community is completely honest, it will remember stories not only of suffering received but also of suffering inflicted - dangerous memories, for they call the community to alter ancient evils. The communities of memory that tie us to the past also turn us toward the future as communities of hope. They carry a context of meaning that can allow us to connect our aspirations for ourselves and those closest to us with the aspirations of a larger whole and

> see our own efforts as being, in part, contributions to a common good. (Bellah, 1985, p. 153)

How is one to deal with the discrepancies between espoused theory and lived reality ? How can one look at the ambiguities and contradictions in all their ugly clarity and not grow cynical? Collaborative research can be the foundation of a strong positive ethos, what Gerald Grant calls a "character ideal" where "...the leadership constantly enunciated an ideal of responsibility to others and stressed the development of character and intellect in a caring community." He adds:

> This orientation was emphasized not only in catalog rhetoric but at every important juncture in the life of the school. Much effort is spent communicating the ideals for which the school stands, and in encouraging a dialogue with the public about those ideals. (Grant, 1988, p. 173)

Insights of Students

Community is built on dialogue, not only with constituencies outside the school, but within the school as well. However, the language of community is particularly susceptible to misuse; it can be hackneyed and trite. Moreover, it can conceal relationships of power which marginalize those who have minority status. This is especially true in schools where communitarian rhetoric co-exists with a powerful ethos of competition(Lesko, 1988). Qualitative inquiry can be especially helpful in this domain because it is particularistic, it creates rather proves hypotheses, it seeks depth not breadth, and since it is ultimately contestable, it raises the level of discussion.

Our discussions with students of color taught us much about social relationships within the school. We heard stories about blatant racism. Some reported physical threats, others told of being banged against lockers. Several recounted the feeling of disgust and fear as they read offensive graffiti on desks and walls. Not a few, quoting White counterparts, told us that the "ND" on a baseball hat does not highlight Notre Dame but rather, "Niggers Die." A number of students described the subtle racism they perceived through others' body language. They reported that White students sometimes "give a look that says, 'You don't belong here.'" Some lamented the disintegration of friendships with

White students who were labeled by members of the majority as "wannabes" or "wiggers." Others talked about the unintended ignorance of many majority students, for example the categorization of all Asians as Chinese or the assumption that all Hispanics are alike. One very successful senior, after describing his feelings of anger and alienation, asked the Director of Diversity, "Unless things change, how can you continue to recruit kids here?" There are many other examples of students' feelings of alienation that we have yet to analyze and codify.

Though the interviews are open-ended, one technique is particularly helpful. We asked the students what questions they themselves would pose if they were conducting the research. The responses are informative and poignant: Were there adults who understood what was going on inside of you? Did people always suspect a minority kid when something was stolen or when a fight started? Do light skinned kids of color have it easier because they can pass? Did your mother ever tell you how much racism hurts? Do people assume that you're a basketball player if you're black? Do you feel like your heritage is on the line whenever you answer a question in school? Why do people think that English is a better language than Spanish? Are poor White kids from the city more prejudiced that rich White kids from the suburbs? Do people get upset when you want to sit with your friends at lunch? When you're at school do you stop being a person and become a race? Do people assume that the only way you can get into a good college is through affirmative action? Did you feel at home until you went to a dance where there were mostly White girls? Is February the only time we talk about African-Americans?

Students also shed light on the problematic rupture of neighborhood and family ties. Many told anecdotes about friends who "just acted differently" or relatives who spoke a language they could no longer understand. Many of the respondents, but especially those who do not speak English at home, puzzle over their new identity in high school. They use images of dual identity: chameleon, being poised between two worlds, unable to be themselves at home or at school. Blacks mention Uncle Tom, Hispanics ,"cholo ;" Asians, "banana [yellow on the outside, white inside]" Descriptions of the time "in-between" home and school was particularly enlightening. One African-American recounted leaving home every morning to get on a bus with all Whites. The frequent aspersions cast on the Puerto Rican bus driver prompted him to reflect, "What do they really think of me?"

We have yet to explore in sufficient depth the intermingling of class, race and ethnicity. When I asked students of color to be concrete about what made them feel excluded, many raised social-class issues. They saw a stunning array of consumer goods at school: watches, footwear, cars. They noticed the luxury of homes in which the majority of students live, the vacations those families take. Some confess envy at the carefree life of entitled students who have the free time to participate in school activities, those who do not need to supplement family income.

Overall, we simply listened and documented students' stories and metaphors in order to appreciate their perspective. We heard many good things along with the negative and difficult: stories of achievement and friendship, of new boundaries crossed and new opportunities grasped. There were poignant accounts of camaraderie on the playing field and unqualified emotional support during illness or a death in the family. We are convinced of the need for this type of inquiry because of its potential to create a more hospitable culture within schools. Our work respects narrative as the beginning of empathy, the source of charismatic and ethical leadership.

Reactivity Or Proactivity?

Though the primary benefit of a university-secondary school collaborative model of reflective practice is creation of a narrative that enhances community and fosters leadership, the venture also has programmatic benefits. It is common knowledge that racist incidents have increased on college campuses and other educational institutions during the past few years. Schools need to have mechanisms in place to react to explosive situations. Universities can help with mediation strategies, counseling opportunities, or simply serve as a safe, neutral place. Moreover, university personnel have access to knowledge about a wide range of responses. Finally, university personnel can provide support for school leaders at critical moments. Such support is essential if administrators are to avoid the tendency simply to make the crisis pass; the reflection on one's reactive stance should be the basis for good proactive policy.

The best proactive response to segregation in school is on-going development of staff and students. I have worked with school personnel to develop the following programmatic initiatives: intra-ethnic support groups for students; a forum for inter-ethnic discussion and learning; expansion of strategies to recruit low-income students of color; sociological data that describe the

environment in which the school exists; access to literature that help members of the school community further explore issues of race, ethnicity and class; access to curricular materials that enhance awareness of diversity. I have also helped faculty and students create mechanisms (speakers, workshops) that foster self-reflection for all members of the school community. Finally, I have facilitated the involvement of Boston College students of color in the school: the African-American Director of Diversity, an African-American student teacher, a Caribbean administrative intern, an Hispanic counseling psychology intern. Given the paucity of adults of color in schools, collaborative relationships can provide role models for students and faculty alike.

Hypotheses

1. University-secondary school collaborative research raises the level of discussion necessary to form inclusive school communities

2. Common themes emerge from qualitative case studies of segregation in school:
   - --- The dynamics of inter-racial relationships
   - --- The need for a sense of home
   - --- The importance of adults of color
   - --- The dynamics of social-class stratification
   - --- The implicit model of cultural assimilation in schools
   - --- The inability or unwillingness of the majority to understand the perspective of the minority

SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPLICATIONS

Drawbacks of the Study

1. It is difficult to generalize from the particular research context
2. There are not enough people of color to build a strong research team
3. Because of restraints on time, the observation-based inquiry is weak
4. Limits of funding and staffing threaten on-going research
5. The controversial nature of the material presents dilemmas of confidentiality and anonymity and this limits entry.

Potential Contribution of Completed Study

1. It contributes to the development of collaborative research which benefits from both the emic and the etic point of view
2. It contributes to the wider body of literature about the subtleties of institutional inclusion and exclusion
3. It provides a powerful rationale for research conducted by teachers about their practice (Hitchcock, 1989)
4. It explores the often-neglected phenomenon of segregation in school; a phenomenon which is certain to increase throughout the 1990s

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